



GILA NEWSLETTER

9TH EDITION

July 20, 2002

IN STRIDE

As we find ourselves currently two-thirds through the month of July, it's amazing to reflect back and realize all the missions we have successfully completed and the professional relationships that we have seen strengthened. Task Force 9th Engineer is an evolving organization that deals with change daily, yet it is the strength of the soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers of this task force that enables the Gila Task Force to succeed, day-in and day-out.

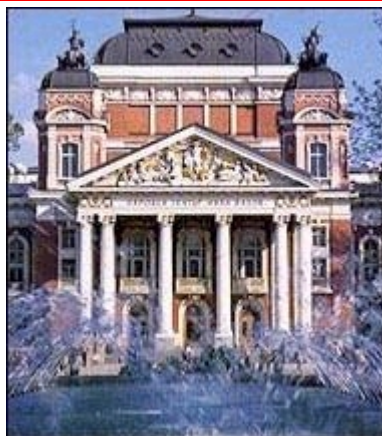
We have now entered a significant period in our rotation; we have completed over one-third of our tour. Now is the time we need to help each other through this typically difficult period. As we continue to work with soldiers to boost morale and maintained a focused attitude, we ask that our family and friends do the same. Support the Family Readiness Group, but more importantly, keep supporting each other.

As we reported in last week's newsletter, the 82nd Engineer Battalion sent its first recon team out here this week. Both our friends in the 82nd and this command judged this recon a success, which we know lays the foundation for a successful transfer of authority come this November. As we have stated before, "the sight of the Blue Babe, never looked so good."

Training continues with ranges being conducted weekly, platoons executing missions, NCOs working to ensure soldier skills do not degrade, and our attached construction engineers and EOD units continuing with their daily missions. We continue to stand guard, protecting the fortress known as CBS (Camp Bondsteel). And lastly, we never sway from our most important mission- supporting the brigade in its effort in maintaining a safe and secure Kosovo.

As we continue on with our mission, we remain vigilant, yet we miss our families dearly.
First to Cross! LTC Nathaniel Idlet

CULTURAL FMPP: "CHAPLAIN'S TRIP"



The National Theater in Sofia: one of the many cultural attractions the capital city of Sofia has to offer

Many have heard of the 4-day pass currently sponsored by MNB-E, known as FMPP (Fighter Management Pass Program). Every soldier is allotted the opportunity to utilize this pass to visit and tour the city of Sofia, Bulgaria. But what many may not know, is that the chaplains currently stationed within MNB-E have come up with an exciting new alternative. Known as, Cultural/Spiritual FMPP, this sponsored 4-day trip offers a comprehensive tour of Sofia and the surrounding sites. From visiting the famous Rila Monastery to enjoying a traditional Bulgarian Meal, soldiers now have alternative to the city limits of Sofia- a comprehensive tour of greater Sofia and its sites.

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TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)



HHC/9E: Headhunters

It has been another fast-paced week in HHC. This week SSG Garcia, Maintenance Platoon Sergeant writes:

“Almost three months into the deployment, HHC’s maintenance platoon has been involved in numerous missions. The platoon is currently divided into four teams and has five sections within the platoon. Among their daily duties and long hours of work, the section has managed to identify class IX Parts and established a manageable and accurate PLL listing, saving the Army Hundreds of thousands of dollars in parts left from previous rotations. The Tool room section has undertaken the task of ensuring all the equipment assigned to Task Force 9E, is properly enrolled and complying with the AOAP program which is designed to detect early warnings of internal wear on major components in the equipment, in the long run this saves the army thousands of dollars and downtime. The Platoon’s recovery section has been busy in supporting the battalion conducting numerous recovery missions. So far they have been successful at each mission. In addition to their 24-hour on call recovery duties, this section has established a working rhythm with Brown and Root in conducting scheduled services for the battalion’s vehicles. The specialty section is currently enjoying a workload not as demanding as they are used to, however they kept themselves busy by improving the facilities in the motor pool, so far they coordinated for the tire storage racks and many minor repairs on all equipment. The headquarters section composed of 1LT Johnson, CW2 Hunter and MSG Davis has stayed as busy as ever. MSG Davis is been working hard on bringing the motor pool up to acceptable standards and ensuring the safety standards are complied with. This section also sponsored some soldiers from the TMK last month. Along with all the busy activities this platoon is involved in, soldiers have committed themselves to further their education at Camp Bondsteel and Camp Monteith, 90% of the platoon is enrolled in civilian education. As usual, the soldiers of HHC’s maintenance platoon are providing outstanding support to the task force and doing a few other extra activities to make life just a little more interesting while deployed here in Kosovo.”



SSG Garcia displays his characteristic enthusiasm on the job in the PLL office



SGT Harris and PV2 Snyder both assisted in running the BN M9 pistol range and seemed to enjoy it

Other activities in the company included another MEDCAP. This mission was not only for the medics as SPC Athey and PFC Cullins were both able to provide some assistance and see some of what life is like for the local population. They both enjoyed it so much that they would gladly do it again! The battalion has ran many ranges this past week including one ran by HHC’s very own SFC Suarez. He was the OIC for the Battalion’s M9 pistol range. His preparation and planning along with the help of many others in the company paid off as the range was both successful and safe. Of course all ranges require ammunition, hence any range ran by the battalion requires the help of Support Platoon. SSG Wilson and SPC Villanueva were constantly in the right place at the right time with the right ammo. This is sometimes a thankless job, but without their support, the ranges just wouldn’t happen. This past week saw many visitors from the 82nd Engineer Battalion in Bamberg visit us on their first recon. This is certainly a positive sign as it signals that our tour is one third complete.



SFC Stanley instructs soldiers on land navigation and then tests them during HHC’s recent Common Task Training stations

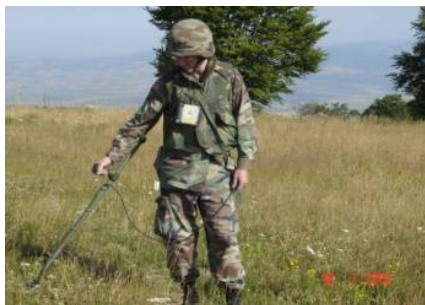




A/9E: Breach Hell!

This week has proven to be as fast and furious as our previous weeks as the mission company. Alpha Company has continued the trend of doing many things well by simultaneously executing up to four missions in a single day, stretching across most of Kosovo. Without further delay, here is what was going on for the platoons this week:

1st platoon completed Force Protection and began Quick Reaction Force this past week. Late on Wednesday evening, 1st platoon received its first mission and within 14 hours they were on their way to clear and mark a lane through an area known to have been a VJ minefield near the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) boarder. The mission was to clear and mark a Landing and Pick-up Zone for CH-47 helicopters, several one-meter footpaths and a large briefing area for COMKFOR (MG Valentin). The KFOR Commander was set to visit the adjusted boarder between FYROM and Kosovo, and 1st Platoon was called in to ensure the safety of the official party. On Thursday, 1st platoon conduct platoon PT test during which the following soldiers earned the physical fitness badge: SFC Agmata scored 297, SSG Labrador scored 291, CPL Brown scored 288 and PFC Rogers scored 282. The army standard to received PT badge is to score 90 points on each event (PU, SU, 2Mile run). First platoon also brought its average up to 264.06, highest score in the company.



SPC Oliver operating the ANPSS-12 Mine detector

SPC Padilla receives little resistance using his ACE to clear a vehicle lane



On Wednesday this week, the Dirty Deuce conducted an M203 (40mm grenade launcher) range for the battalion at Falcon 2. In order for the range to be a success, it required the platoon to build and set up targets and firing stations on Tuesday. The range itself was well designed and built, which aided in the overall success for the platoon. Everyone had the opportunity to qualify or familiarize them self with firing the M203. Next week, the platoon will operate a two-day M4/M16 range for the battalion at Falcon 8.



The Dirty Deuce poses in front of the M203 window target

This week, the sappers of 3rd Platoon commenced work on clearing vegetation on Camp Bondsteel in order to facilitate upcoming Expert Field Medical Badge testing for Falcon medics. SPC Padilla and PFC Clark have already cleared two vehicle lanes using their Armored Combat Earthmovers (ACEs). 2nd and 3rd squads have completed most of their first dismount lane using chain saws, axes and machetes. Their progress moved quickly with the help of SGT Clack, a BOBCAT expert on loan from A/94th Engineers. For many of 3rd Platoon's members, this is the first engineer project they've been involved with. We're finding that seeing the finished product at the end of each day is worth the sweat and sore muscles!

This week, headquarters platoon was short-handed again with SPC West attending the SAM31 course, which will train him how to repair weapons. SPC Letcher and SSG Rojas joined the CO, 1SG, and SFC Williams leaving Camp Bondsteel to shoot at an M9 pistol range. Everyone qualified (the 1SG with the highest score) and had a good time seeing some of the countryside. In next week's issue, look forward to more combat engineer missions for Alpha Company, as we have one more week before we resume the guard shift. Until then, Breach Hell!!





B/9E: Outlaws

The Outlaws are on the move and are moving fast. By the time family members read this letter, we will be very near the halfway point. The 82nd Engineer's reconnaissance team came to visit us, yet we were moving so fast it was hard to find the time to talk to them. The company is not only performing our normal missions of protecting the city and the church, but we are also the TF 1-77's Quick Reactionary Force, training on engineer tasks, performing change of platoon leader inventories, and preparing to relieve a unit in Cerinica. The First Sergeant just said, "We have to be the busiest company down her." Many people were worrying about complacency setting in at the middle of the rotation. I can reassure you that we don't have time for complacency on our training schedule. I have looked and every moment of time is filled up, yet the Outlaws continue to be the most motivated. The temperature keeps increasing to an average of 90 degrees in the center of the city, yet the Outlaws continue to be motivated. We miss our families, yet the Outlaws continue to be motivated. There have been some changes in the city of Gnjilane, that you may have heard about. Many of the locals have changed from drinking coffee to drinking beer during the summer months. This week we had to arrest 2 people for throwing a beer on one of our soldiers.



SPC McBee at range



SSG Beaty filling out a report in the wind

Both men were put in jail for 72 hours. I just mention that to assure family members that the rules down here are stringent enough to assure that the safety of the soldiers is the #1 priority. We can arrest anyone, who threatens us in any way. Speaking of rules, there have been many concerns on the rules concerning soldiers coming back to Germany. The rules are pretty specific, and few if any exceptions will be granted. We just received a Red Cross message that a soldier's Grandmother passed away. I feel awful, but we cannot send a soldier home unless the family member is a mother, father, or another relative who is listed in the soldier's records as his legal guardian. I apologize, but the rules have to be strict, so that the company can continue to perform its mission. There are 101 good reasons to send each soldier back to Germany, but I only have 76 guys, and that is barely enough to get the job done. Just remember the Outlaws, will continue to be with you in spirit. God Bless,
CPT Bill Lash



2LT Hensen and SPC Adams as QRF





C/9E: Dawgs of War

The Dawgs of War continue to work and train hard and prepare for force protection at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. This past Saturday we held our CTT classes (Common Task Training), we had several stations manned by highly motivated Dawgs. At Station One CPL Smith and SGT Walker trained and evaluated the Company on properly wearing and maintaining the protective mask. At Station Two, SGT Flakes and SPC Hensley validated land navigation skills, and SPC Tucker instructed proper wear and use of the MOPP suit and procedures to decontaminate yourself and others.

Lieutenants Christopher and Lavicka returned safely from their bridge training at Camp Casablanca, in Multi-National Brigade (South) or the German sector. They were sad to report that the pleasures of the training were greatly exaggerated - there was no sauna. While the pool was excellent the latest fashion at the poolside for European men left a lot to be desired (Speedo swimsuits) for our young officers. The training proved successful and the lieutenants are very happy to report that the Mabey Johnson Bridge is a great piece of equipment (and that they are glad to be back with the Company).

During the week, SFC Heideman from Second Platoon ran the M16 rifle range for the Battalion. Corporals Casanova and Rehn, and SPC Brekke all qualified expert on their assigned weapons. Our Company as a whole completed the range without a single failure.

Congratulations to the Tucker family on the birth of their bouncing baby girl Joann-Taylor Tucker, born on June 2002. Our best wishes are with the happy family.

At the Company inspection formation held before guard mount SPC Wilson Mitchell was selected as the most squared away soldier for inspection and was awarded a Battalion coin by CSM Rather. SPC Mitchell was also selected as Soldier of the Month for Task Force 9E for the month of July 2002.



SSG Reed's reenlistment on the steps to the Prizren cathedral

Several soldiers have returned from the FMPP trip and attest to the fact that the sights and the shopping are great and the primary focus of the trip. SPC Toman said that "The prices were unbelievable at the stores. I bought a pair of sunglasses for 11 lev (about 5 dollars), the restaurants were a great change from the food at Bondsteel... People talk about how Sophia being a bad city with prostitutes everywhere. I did not see any and there are many great clean things to do. It is a good break from the Army in the middle of the Kosovo rotation."

1LT Greg Parranto reenlisted SSG Robert P. Reed at Prizren on the steps of one of the most historic churches in Kosovo on July 12th, 2002. Dawg 6



A&O soldiers clean their vehicles





A/94E: Warriors



The flight medic treats PV2 Hardy for a laceration



Soldiers carry PV2 Hardy on a litter to the helicopter



PV2 Hardy gets loaded onto the MEDEVAC



The MEDEVAC helicopter takes off from Route Lion

HARD TRAINING, EASY FLIGHT

This week the mighty Alpha Warriors got a chance to partake in a Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) training exercise. The participants were those soldiers constructing on Route Lion. The training kicked off with SGT Street calling the MEDEVAC request in to Battalion. PV2 Hardy had been “injured”. PV2 Hardy “suffered” a laceration to his left forearm caused by the reciprocating saw. It happened while the vertical crew was working on the guard-railing for the Route Lion Bypass. The medic on site was HHC/9E’s PFC Edwards. PFC Edwards treated PV2 Hardy for the laceration and gave him an IV while they waited for the UH-60 Blackhawk to arrive. Once the helicopter touched down, the awaiting litter team then transported PV2 Hardy to the Blackhawk. Then, just as fast as it happened, it was over. The group then conducted an after actions review. Once complete the pilots were kind enough to give a select few rides in the Blackhawk. All in all, it was a great day for MEDEVAC training in the Warriors backyard of Route Lion.





737th EOD

Aftershock 737 continues to conduct all missions assigned providing excellent support to the entire MNB (E) sector. 737th is continuing its partnership with other EOD units from other countries. We are preparing to conduct training with our British, German, Danish and French counterparts. The EOD exchange program is a great way for all EOD technicians to learn about another way to approach an unexploded bomb. We conducted demolition operations this week on Demo Hill. The Danish participated in this event and we learned a lot from each other. The unit also participated in weapons ranges with the rest of the 9th EN BN, this was a great opportunity for my company to become current on all weapons systems. We have seven interpreters dedicated to EOD support and they do an outstanding job for us. Shipque one of our interpreters has done such an outstanding job thus far during rotation that she received a coin from CSM Beam, the MNB (E) CSM. Way to go Shipque ! My counter part (CPT Groggett, 702nd Grafenwoehr) for the next rotation came over to Kosovo for a first look. We were able to show him our entire operation. This was a great morale booster for my guys to know the end is close. We also conducted our first VTC with FT Belvoir, VA. This also was a great morale booster for my soldiers and their spouses.

CPT Green



Aftershock soldiers conducting PMI



Aftershock soldiers setting up a shot for demo operation



Shipque, one of our interpreters



Danish soldiers participating in demo operations



TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)

Scenes from KFOR 4A



Members of the C Co 5K Running Team Champions



EOD soldier participating in weapons qualification



SSG Rojas and SPC Letcher take a break during Alpha 9E's M9 Range



Members of 3rd Squad/A Co, take a breather; refueling their chainsaw and themselves



PFC Edwards, 9E Medic, administers an IV to a role-playing injured soldier from A/94E

Editor in Chief
The Gila Adjutant

TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)

